



News from the Blue Ridge



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Claire & Lorin Cranford

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Family Events:

May has brought a major gardening project around our house. With the spring semester coming to a close, the itch to work in the dirt moved beyond the small flowerbed directly in front of the house. Since moving into the house I've been mulling over in my mind how to take advantage of a gentle slope on a mound across the northeast corner of our front yard. Gradually a picture began taking shape in my mind of how to make this into a nice flowergarden that would enhance the attractiveness of the front of the house. With the help of the grounds keeper at the university who hauled in dirt and mulch for me, I've begun a summer long project of turning the dream into reality. A half tear-shaped flower garden about 30 feet in length and about 7 feet across at the widest point is beginning to take shape. You can tell some-



thing of it by the picture. Flowers, scrubs etc. will gradually fill in the area. Neighbors have stopped numerous times to ask what I was doing, and then when the first segment was planted, to complement the work done so far.

June will be family visit month -- and Claire and I both are eagerly looking forward to everyone's visit. Angie and Brian will arrive with two grandkids on June 8. Brian will have to fly back home on Monday but Angie and the babies will stay with us until July 2. On Sunday June 11, Chris, Charis and four grandkids will arrive for a short visit on their way to Washington D.C. This will be their first trip to NC so we're especially excited about their coming. The following weekend Mike and Kathy Brannon from San Diego, CA will spend some time with us. Mike is one of my California cousins. We played together as youngsters on their trips back east to TS and NC in the 1950s. This is going to be a wonderful time of visiting and remember-



University Happenings:

Summer school began May 24. For me that involves two teaching responsibilities. The New Testament survey course in the G.O.A.L. program over the ten week summer session. This is a repeat of the online version of Religion 3050 that I offered in the spring semester. With the university's shift to the Blackboard.com distance learning software structure, the setting up and administering of the course is significantly easier than in the spring semester. We have gotten off to an excellent beginning during the first two weeks of the term. If you would like to take a look at the course, most of it is operated from the academic section of Cranfordville. Go to GWU classes, then to Religion 3050 summer term. The discussion forums and chat rooms are located on Blackboard and are available only to those enrolled in the class, but the other materials are open to everyone at the Cranfordville site. I'm encouraged by the progress being made by GWU in getting this very good computer software system set up and debugged. It will offer a number of good things to all professors at GWU as the learning process increasingly makes use of technology.

The other summer school responsibility won't come until the third week of July when I teach a one week advanced elective course in the MDiv program on the parables of Jesus. Work continues in developing an interactive electronic textbook for the course which will be located both at Cranfordville and on a CD-ROM, and available through C&L Publications. This will be an innovative approach to learning that will hopefully enhance the quality of the class room experience greatly for the students. You can check this out by going to the academic course room of Cranfordville and click on DSNT401P, where the materials are located on the internet.

A major writing project for the summer is the massive revision of the Greek grammar released last summer. This past year of implementation uncovered numerous expansions that will strengthen the grammar. These are being incorporated, along with an extension of the grammar to cover three semesters instead of two. Some exciting additions to the grammar are underway. C&L Publications will release it in July.

ing "the good ole days." The third weekend of June, Carrie will arrive for an extended weekend visit. With the two daughters here together our house will be filled to overflowing with laughter, teasing and lots of fun. During the last week of June Brian will return with some friends to spend a few days before the two families begin a leisurely return trip back to Texas checking out places between NC and TX. July will be rest up time for Claire and me after a wonderful family time in June!

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Claire's Musings:

May 31, 2000

School ended for most about May 26, but not for us. We have about 1 1/2 weeks of remediation to do with some of our students. If they did not pass the End-of-Grade Tests the first two times, then they have to be remediated and then take the test for a third time. It's difficult, because everyone (students and teachers) are very tired. At least the students only stay for half a day and they still are fidgety. I know it's particularly hard for the students who are just unable to pass the test no matter how many times they try. The Resource students do not have to be remediated again, but there are the few students who seem to fall between the cracks. The teachers that I work with on the third floor (4th and 5th grade) are absolutely wonderful. Most of these kids do not eat breakfast before they come to school and of course they are hungry. Teachers, in general, tend to spend a lot of money for their classroom and now these teachers are buying snacks and drinks, such as granola bars and milk, to bring to school for these students. They are dedicated teachers who truly want to see these students succeed.

Thankfully, I will be out of school by the time that Angie, Brian, and the kids get here. That is what I am really looking forward to and gives me so much to be excited about. Brian can only stay for an extended weekend, but we are thankful for that. Angie, Clay, and Taylor will be with us for three weeks. It's too good to be true. Of course, I don't know if that will be long enough to do everything we want to do. We have so much to do around here and it's mostly free. I'm sure we will go to the mountains and hike and picnic in parks. Lorin and I love our river walk close to home and recently a children's play area was added. The next newsletter should be full of reminiscing about what we did. I'm anxious to finish school so I can prepare for the visits of others. We will have a houseful with guests overlapping. I can't wait.

an ounce of sanity will repudiate such theological garbage immediately! The splintering of the SBC into a mess of little squabbling groups, more interested in fighting one another than spreading the gospel will be the outcome! Such has been the fruit of Norrisism for almost a century in the independent Baptist movement. I saw this in my last pastorate in Ft. Worth where, not far from the church I pastored, two fundamentalist Baptist churches were located on opposite ends of the same city block and neither would acknowledge that the other congregation even existed, although both had split off of the same FBC of Fort Worth! The poor pastor of one of the churches had been deceived when the pulpit committee convinced him to leave a church in New England and come to Fort Worth. He had an awful experience with the congregation in trying to lead them into a spiritually healthy Christianity. Eventually I helped him make a move into pastoring a SBC congregation elsewhere.

This brand of Christianity represents a serious perversion of biblical Christianity and has cultic tones. The SBC in moving toward it is sealing its fate as an irrelevant religious group who has abandoned the teachings of Christ.



Lorin's Musings:

Late in May you've begun noticing news reports in national and local media regarding the upcoming Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Orlando. The most controversial aspect is the proposed revision of the Baptist Faith and Message statement. What's that?

For most lay people it is a rather meaningless document stating basic Baptist beliefs of Southern Baptists -- only the SBC is involved here, the vast majority of Baptists worldwide have nothing to do with it. Baptists historically are a non-creedal group of Christians. From our earliest European beginnings we have rejected the idea of adopting creeds as the official doctrinal stance of the denomination. "No creed but the Bible" has been the consistent stance of Baptists groups around the world for over three hundred years.

For Southern Baptists this is about to change. The fundamentalist takeover of the SBC in the 80s and 90s has set in motion a fundamental change in the nature of Southern Baptist life. As Keith Parks has so insightfully (TBC, May 2000, p.28) stated, the basis of Southern Baptist cooperation and harmony has been shifted from a joint commitment to doing missions to an attempt to enforce doctrinal uniformity. Although the revised BFM (Baptist Faith and Message) won't immediately impact folks in the local churches, eventually it will and in the most destructive way imaginable.

The first victims of the new BFM will be those working at the national denomination agency level, e.g., the missionaries. Then those state conventions who have become slaves to the national SBC organization will be decimated next. Praise God for Virginia and Texas Baptists especially who have already said a resounding "No Way" to this nonsense! Gradually local church pastors will be coerced into conformity under the often privately stated and enforced threat of fundamentalist SBC leaders already, "Get in line or else!"

Southern Baptists nationally could learn much from the destructive impact of Norrisism in Texas Baptist life in the 1920s. As the then president of Southwestern Seminary, L. R. Scarborough, noted in 1924, Norrisite fundamentalism is "wholly destructive in spirit and methods...anti-missionary and anti-institutional...thrives on sensationalism, misrepresentation and false accusations of good men and true causes...." The present day SBC leaders are the spiritual descendents of Frank Norris and his mentality. Witness the move of Jerry Falwell to SBC life! The current pastor of Norris' old church, FBC of Fort Worth, has already led his congregation to affiliate with the SBC.

Thus doctrinal conformity will quickly turn into "conformity to whose doctrine"! Already the battle is foaming under the surface between the hyper-Calvinists led by Albert Mohler on the one side, and the sensationalist evangelism approach led by Adrian Rodgers and others on the other side. The new BFM edges somewhat in the direction of hyper-Calvinism. More importantly, however, it no longer expresses confidence that the believer is capable of coming to a understanding of his/her Christian experience with the help of the Holy Spirit. It will now have to be interpreted to the believer by the higher authority of the ordained exclusively male preacher! Southern Baptists with